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Regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report on regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights has been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/210 of 18 December 2002, and contains information on the action taken pursuant to that resolution. The report focuses on the regional strategies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the most significant developments since 2002.

In order to maximize the impact of the activities of the United Nations at the national level, the Office of the High Commissioner has been systematically pursuing a regional and subregional approach through a variety of complementary means and methods, in particular by supporting the establishment of regional frameworks for the promotion and protection of human rights, adopting a subregional focus wherever appropriate, outposting regional and subregional representatives, concluding cooperative agreements with United Nations agencies and regional institutions, undertaking joint regional projects, and sponsoring or organizing consultations and dialogues.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 57/210 of 18 December 2002, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-ninth session a report on the state of regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, to formulate concrete proposals and recommendations on ways and means to strengthen cooperation between United Nations and regional arrangements in the field of human rights, and to include therein the results of action taken in pursuance of that resolution.

2. The present report focuses on the regional strategies of OHCHR and the most significant developments since 2002, when the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly the previous report on the subject (A/57/283).

II. Regional strategies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

3. Progress in protecting and promoting human rights depends primarily on actions taken at the national level — actions that are directly linked to the full application of the provisions of core international human rights treaties. However, in order to maximize the impact at the national level of the activities of the United Nations, OHCHR has been systematically pursuing a regional and subregional approach through a variety of complementary means and methods, including, in particular, the following:

(a) Supporting the establishment of regional frameworks for the promotion and protection of human rights;

(b) Adopting a subregional focus wherever appropriate;

(c) Outposting regional and subregional representatives;

(d) Concluding cooperative agreements with United Nations agencies and regional institutions, undertaking joint regional projects, and sponsoring or organizing consultations and dialogues.

4. The Framework for Regional Technical Cooperation for the Asia-Pacific Region, the first arrangement of its kind, was established by Governments of the region at Tehran in 1998, when agreement was reached on the four pillars of the Framework, namely, (a) elaboration of national plans of action in the field of human rights; (b) establishing and strengthening national institutions; (c) promotion of human rights education; and (d) strategies for economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. The most recent two-year programme of action under the Framework was adopted at Doha in March 2004.

5. In 1999, several Governments of the Latin American and Caribbean region adopted the Quito Framework for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, which also has the above-mentioned four pillars, plus a fifth one, concerning the protection of vulnerable groups. A number of activities were undertaken in Uruguay in 2001 for MERCOSUR (South American Common Market), in Peru for the Andean region and in Argentina for the Latin American and Caribbean region as a whole, as part of the implementation of the Quito Framework.

6. The International Conference on Human Rights and Democratization, held at Dubrovnik, Croatia, in October 2001 in partnership with the Government of Croatia, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), stressed the particular importance of providing support to the fledgling civil societies in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, strengthening the links to United Nations standards and mechanisms and developing national plans and infrastructures for human rights as well as human rights education activities.

7. In Africa, OHCHR efforts are focused primarily on a subregional approach in Southern, Central, East and West Africa. Consultations and dialogues on priority issues have been initiated with Governments and various sectors of African society, including politicians, lawyers, academics and civil society institutions. The African Regional Dialogue I, held in Geneva in November 2001, and Dialogue II, held in Arusha, Tanzania, in May 2002, produced tangible results, providing guidance to Governments, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations and better links with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Union and other subregional organizations.

8. OHCHR has developed projects of cooperation with several Arab countries and has identified several key issues of common concern, including human rights awareness-raising, civil society networking and training, and the need to translate human rights training materials into Arabic. A joint regional project with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on these issues is now in operation. The Arab Charter on Human Rights deserves special mention for being a promising endeavour that enjoys OHCHR's substantial support.

9. The OHCHR provides support to the regional secretariats of National Institutions. This partnership strategy vis-à-vis National Institutions emphasizes the establishment and strengthening of regional networks and provides support not only for the annual meetings of regional networks but for substantive initiatives, such as the respect for human rights in combating terrorism (Mexico, September 2003, and Nepal, February 2004), investigation techniques (Sri Lanka, November 2003) indigenous people's rights (Colombia, March 2004) and prevention of torture (Argentina, June 2004).

Outposting of regional and subregional representatives

10. The placement by OHCHR of regional representatives began recently with the establishment of presences in two subregions (that of the Southern African Development Community at Pretoria, and that of the Economic Community of Central African States at Yaoundé), as well as at the regional commissions for Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Western Asia and Africa. The posting of OHCHR regional and subregional representatives at Santiago, Bangkok, Beirut and Addis Ababa allows for closer working relationships with States, United Nations country teams, international and regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations.

Cooperative arrangements with United Nations and regional organizations and institutions

11. The development of new relationships, in particular with regional organizations and institutions, has been a major focus of OHCHR action. A number

of memorandums of understanding have been concluded in the past few years - such as with UNDP, the regional commissions and, more recently, with the League of Arab States in the second quarter of 2002. These arrangements have resulted in concrete practical collaborative efforts that facilitate the integration and mainstreaming of human rights into the work programmes of OHCHR partners.

III. Regional frameworks

A. Africa

12. OHCHR's regional arrangement in Africa is on two levels. First, support to the African Union (AU) for the strengthening of its human rights system and, secondly, subregional representation to strengthen national and subregional human rights capacities.

13. On the first level, OHCHR supported the AU secretariat in Addis Ababa in developing a programme to facilitate the mainstreaming of human rights in its policies and activities; its campaign for ratification of the Protocol for the Establishment of the African Court; and for the finalization of the process towards the adoption of the Protocol on the rights of women. The women's protocol was adopted in July 2003 by the AU Summit. The Office also assisted African civil society and national institutions' participation in the work of the African Human Rights Commission, through grants and fellowships. In respect to other human rights-related programmes of AU, OHCHR has been involved in capacity-building programmes tailored towards the effective mainstreaming of human rights in the implementation of NEPAD and the African Peer Review Mechanisms at the different levels.

14. At the request of AU, OHCHR supported the realization of the second AU Ministerial Conference on Human Rights, which took place in May 2003, in Kigali. The then Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights led a delegation of African experts from civil society, research institutions and national human rights institutions to participate in the Conference. OHCHR also facilitated the NGO preparatory meeting, held in Nairobi and the preparation of background papers for the Conference.

15. As the oldest treaty body in Africa, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) continued to benefit from substantive and technical assistance from OHCHR through a peer-learning process, involving the exchange of staff and participation of African Commission members in United Nations treaty body meetings. This has contributed to the improvement of the Commission working methods and collaboration with the treaty bodies.

16. Furthermore, in response to a request from the African Commission, the Office facilitated a retreat of its members, held from 24 to 26 September 2003 in Addis Ababa. The retreat was designed as an opportunity to reflect critically on the functioning of the African human rights system and make concrete suggestions to improve the methods of work and procedures of the Commission and strengthen its secretariat.

17. From 10 to 12 March 2003, the Office organized an Expert Regional Consultative meeting on human rights and regional integration in Africa in

collaboration with the Legon Centre for International Affairs in Accra. The meeting brought together 46 participants drawn from various international, regional and subregional organizations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations in Africa as well as representatives of the Organisation internationale de la francophonie.

18. At the subregional level, the OHCHR offices in Southern Africa, Central Africa, East Africa were the main focal points for the mainstreaming and integration of human rights within United Nations country teams (UNCTS) and in the work of regional and subregional institutions, thus facilitating the provision of technical assistance, strengthening of capacities at the national level and the implementation of conclusions and recommendations of treaty bodies and mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights. In addition, the offices, through their relationship with the subregional economic communities, had the responsibility of facilitating subregional responses to issues of a transnational nature. The regional offices also serve to monitor human rights developments at the national level which help to sharpen OHCHR programs and increase their relevance and benefit for regional actors.

19. The regional office in Addis Ababa played a very important role in the regional dialogues undertaken in the transition process for the Africa Union, especially on issues relating to human rights, democratic and good governance and the rule of law. The Office's ability to interact closely with key regional actors has proven invaluable and the presence of a regional office in Addis Ababa invariably put a focus on human rights thus facilitating the integration of human rights in the continental vision. Its collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) offers the opportunity for OHCHR to refine its conceptual approach and to test the tools and instruments to promote rights-based development. In 2003, the Regional Office participated in planning of the African Development Forum and made substantial input to the African Governance Report. It has also been disseminating appropriate literature on the rights-based approach to development and organized a workshop with the African Centre on Gender and Development.

20. In the context of the East African countries it covers, the regional office in Addis Ababa has conducted various activities in Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Eritrea, including facilitating the creation of a human rights focal group within the UNCT. In 2003, it implemented programmes involving training, workshops, seminars and the development of manuals to promote a human rights culture at the national level, working closely with other agencies and a network of civil society organizations.

21. In 2003, the Southern Africa regional office, co-funded by OHCHR and UNDP, carried out three cluster training workshops that benefited approximately 200 participants from Governments, civil society organizations and UNCTs in the region, on "the implementation of the human rights standards" (Mbabane, Malawi, 10-12 June 2003), "human rights and governance" (Mauritius, 10-12 September 2003) and "the contribution of civil society to the promotion and protection of human rights in Southern Africa" (Pretoria, 28-29 November 2003).

22. The cluster approach adopted for the above-mentioned activities was cost-effective and conducive to exchange of experiences within group of countries sharing similar realities or willing to learn from best practices in their region and establish networks. Experts and resource persons were drawn from human rights

research institutions within the region, which are familiar with both the theory and practice of human rights. UNDP offices and resident coordinators, both in the participating countries and in the host countries, provided commendable support in the preparation and facilitation of these workshops.

23. In addition to these workshops, the Southern African Office was able to provide technical advice and limited assistance to partners — such as the secretariats of AU, SADC, NEPAD and national Governments, institutions of civil society such as academic, religious, cultural institutions, and private-sector establishments.

24. In the fulfilment of its mandate, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa continues to run programmes and activities enhancing the task of the United Nations in the promotion of human rights, democratic principles and values in the subregion.

25. In the years under review, subregional workshops and seminars focusing, inter alia, on human rights education and related aspects of the administration of justice, and more particularly military justice, human rights and the rule of law for media professionals, and the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups (women and children) in Central Africa, have been given to key leaders, human rights activists and representatives of civil society.

26. In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in July 2002 between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Subregional Centre provided technical assistance to the ECCAS secretariat with the aim of reinforcing its analytical capacities and enhancing the operability of the subregional Mechanism for Early Warning (MARAC). The two institutions are also involved in joint activities of a subregional character.

27. In West Africa, OHCHR intensified its discussions with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with a view to establishing a subregional presence that would assist in the development and implementation of a human rights framework in the subregion.

28. OHCHR provided support to the secretariat for the Coordinating Committee of African National Human Rights Institutions, since its creation in 2002 by the fourth Regional Conference of African National Human Rights Institutions.

B. Arab region

29. The Regional Office for the Arab region in Beirut was established in February 2002 following a Memorandum of Intent signed between OHCHR and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), as part of an overall strategy aimed at enabling OHCHR to respond more adequately and strategically to the human rights needs of respective Arab countries. The mandate of the office included working with Governments for the promotion and protection of human rights, the ratification of international instruments, conformity of national legislation with international obligations, reporting to treaty bodies and assistance to judiciary, police and government officials on the rule of law and human rights.

30. The Office works to promote the implementation of the international human rights instruments and to provide support to special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights. Technical assistance or advisory services are being provided, especially on the use of OHCHR Guidelines (on poverty reduction, trafficking, HIV/AIDS, internally displaced persons and gender mainstreaming) and on methodological tools, such as the Professional Training Series manuals.

Cooperation with ESCWA and UNCTs on mainstreaming human rights in development programmes and activities and promoting a right-based approach

31. The Regional Office in Beirut is committed to raising awareness among UNCT members of specific recommendations of United Nations human rights bodies with a view to integrating them better into their programming as well as into the common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) processes. With a view to mainstreaming human rights, the Regional Representative supports the establishment of thematic human rights working groups within UNCTs, and advises them on human rights priorities.

Working with civil society organizations through capacity-building, training, participation in national and regional activities and providing NGOs with documentation

32. As a result of the work of its Regional Office, OHCHR has been able to strengthen its partnerships outside the United Nations system, in particular with regional and national organizations, including NGOs.

33. In 2002, a Memorandum of Intent on cooperation in the field of protection and promotion of human rights was signed between OHCHR and the League of Arab States (LAS). Pursuant to this Memorandum, OHCHR organized a week-long training course in September 2003 for staff from the League secretariat. The course aimed to develop stronger working relations between the two organizations, to promote a better understanding of the work of OHCHR among LAS staff, and to familiarize them with international human rights instruments and mechanisms.

34. Within the framework of OHCHR-LAS cooperation, considerable emphasis is placed on the progress of the Arab Charter on Human Rights. Thus, OHCHR established a committee of five experts, from Qatar, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Algeria, to comment on the draft Arab Charter for Human Rights finalized by the Arab Human Rights Commission in October 2003. In December 2003, the experts held a series of meetings with the League of Arab States Secretariat in Cairo and submitted their recommendations to the Arab Commission. In January 2004, the Commission adopted the new text, which reflects many of the recommendations made by the experts. The final text of the Charter was finally adopted by the Arab Summit, held in Tunis on 22-23 May 2004. Despite concerns about some parts of the Charter, the current document constitutes a major improvement over the 1994 text because it addresses certain issues, such as states of emergency, fair trials, slavery, sexual violence, disability and trafficking, which were either omitted or not well formulated in the earlier version. It also creates a promising monitoring mechanism similar to the Human Rights Committee.

35. Following the recent adoption of the Arab Charter, OHCHR intends to develop a broader technical cooperation programme in cooperation with LAS, with a view to enhancing its human right capacities. In addition, OHCHR will continue the

consultations initiated with the secretariat of LAS by inviting senior officials to participate in conferences and events organized in the Arab region.

36. In December 2003, OHCHR organized in Damascus a subregional training workshop for government officials, NGOs and the national human rights institution in Jordan (National Centre for Human Rights) and other stakeholders from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic on implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

37. The recommendations called for, inter alia, the strengthening of coordination and cooperation among government structures and civil society, with the participation of youth and children, in order to enhance implementation of human rights obligations.

38. In February 2004, in the context of the Asia-Pacific Regional Framework, OHCHR organized in Doha the Subregional Workshop on Human Rights Education in School Systems of the six States of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Representatives of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates attended the workshop. In addition, the observer for Yemen also took part in the workshop. Several national and regional NGOs, as well as national human rights institutions, were invited. A significant outcome of the workshop was the adoption of a number of recommendations including, at the policy level, closer cooperation in the field of human rights education, and more specifically, encouraging the concerned bodies in the GCC member States to ratify and study the international and Arab conventions and treaties related to human rights, to develop national strategies and plans in the field of human rights education, and to expand their activity with regard to introducing human rights education principles and goals in educational regulations. The workshop also called for increased efforts towards integrating human rights into school and university curricula, and for training to be considered as a basic part of the strategies of human rights education.

39. The Regional Project on Human Development and Human Rights (PARDHUR) is a joint project of OHCHR and UNDP, agreed upon in 2002. Currently implemented by the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), it aims at fostering dialogue in the Arab region between Governments, civil society and researchers, towards improved protection and promotion of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. Within the framework of this project, a series of round tables was organized on specific themes related to human rights conventions and their relevance for a human rights-based approach to development for the benefit of parliamentarians, senior policy-level government officials, educators, private sector leaders and public-opinion makers, journalists and NGOs. During the reporting period, the following round tables included:

(a) A workshop on human rights and the media was held in Cairo, 21-22 January 2003. This workshop provided numerous constructive discussions on the challenges facing freedom of the media, the technical ambiguities found in the media's handling of human rights issues and regarding the role played by the media in promoting the respect of human rights and in encouraging human development in the Arab region, as well as the means to support the United Nations' message in the Arab media;

(b) A workshop on social, economic and cultural rights held in Morocco, in July 2003, organized by AOHR and the Moroccan Documentation and Information

Centre. The regional representative of UNDP-RBAS and some 60 representatives of Arab NGOs and activists, from 13 Arab countries, attended the workshop;

(c) A workshop on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and on violence against women was organized in Beirut, on 26-27 January 2004, with a large participation of Arab women from the region, in particular from the Gulf countries;

(d) A workshop on the role of civil society in the reform process in the Arab world was held in Alexandria, Egypt, in June 2004. Both the Beirut and the Alexandria workshops saw the participation of representatives from civil society and Arab Governments, as well as United Nations agencies. These were opportunities to analyse the obstacles to full participation of women and civil society in the process of reform. In addition, these workshops encouraged constructive dialogue between Governments and components of civil society, as well as to promote human rights in general. These two workshops equally made it possible to encourage the League of Arab States and the States in the region in their efforts to modernize the Arab Charter and to adopt the revised text;

(e) Publications were produced for dissemination and the Arabic-language web site (www.arabhumanrights.org) was developed.

C. Asia and the Pacific

40. OHCHR has strengthened its efforts towards reinforcing regional cooperation for human rights in Asia and the Pacific. Two annual workshops of the Framework on Regional Cooperation for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Asian-Pacific Region (hereinafter, the Asian-Pacific Framework) were organized at Islamabad in 2003 and at Doha in 2004. These workshops have continued to follow a "step-by-step", "building block" approach by taking stock of achievements made in the following four priority pillars, as identified in the 1998 Tehran Annual Workshop: national human rights action plans; national human rights institutions; human rights education; and strategies for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development. As such, in the context of the Asian-Pacific Framework, ongoing consultations aimed at the possible establishment of regional human rights arrangements have been held among Governments with the support and advice of national human rights institutions and civil society organizations of the Asian-Pacific region.

41. The following intersessional activities were also undertaken: a Subregional Workshop for Judges and Lawyers on the Justiciability of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was organized by OHCHR in cooperation with the International Commission of Jurists as well as with the substantive support of the International Bar Association (26-28 January 2004, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia); a study on popular and non-formal human rights education in the Asia-Pacific Region was carried out in February 2004; and the 8th Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Forum (APF) was held from 16 to 18 February 2004, in Kathmandu with the support of OHCHR.

42. The Doha twelfth Annual Workshop of the Asian-Pacific Framework adopted a two-year plan of action for 2004-2006, which is to be implemented over the next two-year period, subject to the availability of resources from the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights. The Doha Programme of

Action has the following main objectives under each of the above-mentioned four pillars:

(a) To gather lessons learnt and best practices in the region and to develop tools for the development of national plans of action;

(b) To strengthen national capacities for human rights education with a focus on the incorporation of it within the school system;

(c) To support regional initiatives to strengthen the role of national human rights institutions and the Asia-Pacific Forum; and

(d) To strengthen national capacities to realize economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development.

43. In the conclusions of the Doha Annual Workshop, participants reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing subregional, regional and international cooperation to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, in conformity with international obligations. Moreover, in response to the need for adjusting the current pattern of annual workshops linked with the four pillars, Governments at the workshop not only recognized the achievements made thus far through the Asian-Pacific Framework, but also welcomed the possible inclusion in the upcoming annual workshops of a thematic focus, whose theme is to be decided upon by member States.

44. These intergovernmental efforts are complemented by the work of the OHCHR Regional Representative for Asia-Pacific, based in Bangkok. The Regional Representative endeavours to strengthen government actions as well as to help the United Nations system and civil society make interventions to assist Governments better protect human rights. The project under which the Regional Office operates aims at: promoting the implementation of the rights-based approach to development by the United Nations system; helping to establish or strengthen national human rights protection systems; helping the United Nations human rights system make more effective protection interventions; maximizing the cooordinated impact in Asia-Pacific of OHCHR work on priority themes and deepen the Asia-Pacific regional perspective in OHCHR's global work on these themes; and, developing more cooperative relationships with Governments in the region.

45. An important function of the Regional Representative has been to facilitate exchanges of information and experiences from the region. The quarterly Practitioners' Forum on Human Rights in Development was held in 2004 on such topics as the lessons learned from UNICEF's experience with the rights-based approach, UNDP's rights-based access to justice projects and the right to education. Under the auspices of the regional Forum, the first-ever national Forum was convened in China in March 2004, entitled "The rights-based approach to development".

46. Facilitating the exchange of practical information is a primary function of the office of the regional representative. In this regard, the office has initiated a small project ("Human Rights Approach to Development — Lessons Learned") intended to draw lessons from development programmes in the region that have sought to implement a human rights approach. The Lessons Learned Project is expected to conclude in the early part of 2005. A second tool for facilitating information exchange in this area is the Rights-Based Approach (RBA) Database, which makes

readily available a wealth of documents relevant to the human rights approach to development. The RBA database can be found at www.un.or.th/ohchr/database/RBAUserSearch.asp. The office of the Regional Representative also regularly updates and disseminates a range of information resources (available at www.un.or.th/ohchr), including on the major human rights news in the region, highlights from international human rights meetings and conferences, on ratifications of and reservations to the core human rights treaties, reporting by States on their implementation of the treaties, and visits to countries in the region by thematic and country experts of the Commission since 1993. Finally, the Regional Representative also makes available a range of training materials on various human rights topics.

47. Training is another major focus of the work of the Regional Representative. The office of the Regional Representative has assisted a number of UNCTs develop strong CCA/UNDAFs, contributing resource persons on the human rights aspects of the CCA and UNDAF processes in global workshops, and delivering more targeted human rights training to UNCTs, including in Vietnam, Indonesia and Suva. In addition, the Regional Representative is working with various divisions and units of ESCAP to increase understanding and awareness of human rights through regular, brief training sessions on the rights-based approach.

48. The Regional Representative actively contributes to the airing of views by civil society in the region. Civil society networks on human rights issues are vibrant in some areas, and have grown stronger, particularly since the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, but remain extremely weak elsewhere. Human rights defenders have come under attack in most of the sub-regions. Thus, the Regional Representative has worked to bring together civil society representatives on a subregional basis, by holding annual consultations, previously in South and Southeast Asia, and more recently, in 2004, in the Pacific region.

49. In addition, the Regional Representative helps to bring members of civil society together, along with United Nations, governmental and development cooperation agencies, around particular issues. In March 2004, the Regional Representative and its partner agencies and organizations convened an Expert Meeting on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights in Asia-Pacific. This expert meeting was part of a broader project to develop recommendations on integrating human rights into HIV/AIDS responses in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Office is exploring how best to support national-level follow-up activities with potential partners.

50. Another issue-specific initiative was a Regional Housing Rights Dialogue organized by ESCAP in June 2004. The Regional Representative collaborated closely with ESCAP in organizing the dialogue, which brought together grass-roots actors and housing rights advocates to explore the usefulness of a rights-based approach to housing issues. The results of the dialogue were presented to the ESCAP Subcommittee on Poverty Reduction, and further follow-up actions are being examined.

51. The Regional Representative continues to support further expert and civil society consultations on specific rights being organized by ESCAP. Agreement has been reached to collaborate in the immediate future on issues relating to the rights of elderly persons.

52. In mapping out the needs in the region and the resources available to fulfil them, OHCHR keeps its priorities under constant review to ensure responsiveness to emerging needs. One such area is the Pacific, whose representatives at international and regional forums indicate the need for separate attention, including on human rights matters. The Pacific countries have recently emerged as an important area for OHCHR support.

53. Following a recommendation of the Doha Annual Workshop, OHCHR has begun to examine the possibility of establishing a presence in the Pacific. To this end, OHCHR completed a needs-assessment mission to the Pacific (12 May to 4 June 2004) in order, inter alia:

(a) To assess the need for involvement by OHCHR in the work of the UNCT, based in Fiji, by discussing ways and means of cooperation with regard to human rights support to existing programmes, as well as of mainstreaming human rights into the work of the UNCT; and

(b) To hold consultations with the Governments concerned, national human rights institutions (Australia, Fiji and New Zealand), APF, donor agencies (AUSAID and NZAID), human rights NGOs and other civil society organizations with a view to identifying and assessing technical assistance needed to strengthen national human rights protection systems in the Pacific.

54. OHCHR, through the Regional Representative, also co-organized the Pacific Human Rights Consultation (1-3 June 2004) in cooperation with APF, the Fiji Human Rights Commission and the Commonwealth Secretariat, with financial support from NZAID. The participants in this consultation recognized, inter alia, the importance of implementing basic minimum human rights norms and standards and called on donors and regional and international agencies to assist Pacific Island nations in applying such standards through a range of initiatives, such as the possible establishment of an OHCHR human rights adviser in the UNCT in Fiji to identify technical cooperation needs in the Pacific and work with all relevant human rights partners.

55. Specialized national institutions are particularly useful mechanisms for human rights protection. OHCHR actively contributes to the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions in the region by directly lending technical and legal advice and political support, as well as collaborating with other multilateral and bilateral actors active in this field. Specialized capacity-building activities are strongly supported, including through the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, a peer support organization comprised of national institutions. OHCHR is a founding sponsor of APF.

D. Europe

56. In Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus, OHCHR further intensified its cooperation with regional organizations, including the Council of Europe, OSCE and the European Union, and with regional civil society organizations and networks, such as the International Helsinki Federation. OHCHR's activities in the countries in Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus reflect key features of the United Nations human rights programme highlighted in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, including support to the treaty bodies and special procedures, national

institutions, national plans of action and human rights education. OHCHR continued to consolidate subregional approaches by establishing programmes for Central Asia and South-East Europe, and by conducting planning activities for the Caucasus. The subregional approaches summarize activities on the national level of the countries concerned. The approach is intended to complement the work of United Nations agencies, OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Union and other international actors and focus on key human rights gaps not covered by the mandates of these organizations. The activities of OHCHR are mainly to provide advice on human rights mainstreaming within common strategic approaches by international or regional organizations.

57. OHCHR, the Council of Europe and OSCE maintained high-level contacts on a regular basis. The director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of OSCE, Mr. Christian Strohal, addressed the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions in Geneva. In November 2002, the High Commissioner addressed the Permanent Council of OSCE in Vienna. In December 2002, the High Commissioner participated in the 10th Ministerial Meeting of OSCE held at Porto, Portugal, where he highlighted areas of cooperation, including human rights and terrorism; technical assistance programmes in Central Asia and the South Caucasus; human rights training throughout the region; and strengthening of national human rights institutions and ombudsmen.

58. OHCHR has numerous funding arrangements with the European Commission in support of its field presences and technical cooperation projects, such as a project on supporting rights-sensitive transitional justice arrangements in post-conflict and post-crisis countries, which started in June 2002.

59. OHCHR was invited to participate in discussions that started at NATO in 2003 and led to the development of a policy regarding trafficking, adopted in June 2004, and endorsed by NATO and the Heads of State and Government at the Istanbul Summit.

60. Working-level consultations on human rights issues continue to be held between OHCHR and the two regional organizations, both at their respective headquarters and in the field. OHCHR works with OSCE, the Council of Europe and other organizations in the Gender Task Force and the Trafficking Task Force of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. Objectives of cooperation include the development of a common regional approach and the promotion of legal frameworks to prevent trafficking and provide protection to victims. OHCHR, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and UNICEF issued jointly, in December 2003, an updated report on trafficking in human beings in South-Eastern Europe, prepared within the framework of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. The report presents the current situation and responses to trafficking in the countries of the subregion.

61. OHCHR continues to coordinate and implement its country activities in consultation with OSCE missions and Council of Europe information centres in the field. Together with OSCE, OHCHR continues to operate a human rights office in Abkhazia, Georgia, which is part of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia.

62. In the subregion of Central Asia, OHCHR started implementing the four-year Regional Project for Central Asia that covers Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan

and Uzbekistan. The project aims at raising broad public understanding of human rights thereby promoting respect for fundamental liberties and societies based on democratic principles and strengthen national capacities in the field of human rights education. In March 2004, the OHCHR Regional Adviser for Central Asia was deployed to the region. The adviser, who serves as a resource person for governments, policy-makers, scholars, civil society and others to develop human rights policies, works in close cooperation with the OSCE offices in the countries and participates actively in conferences and high-level meetings organized by OSCE.

63. The Council of Europe and OSCE are key regional partners in the follow-up to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. OHCHR organized two regional expert seminars to study modalities for the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: one hosted by the Government of the Czech Republic for Eastern Europe (see E/CN.4/2004/17/Add.1), held in Prague from 24 to 26 September 2003, and one hosted by the Government of Belgium for Western Europe (E/CN.4/2004/17/Add.2), held in Brussels from 10 to 12 December 2003.

64. At the Conference on Anti-Semitism organized by OSCE in Berlin (April 2004), an OHCHR representative made a presentation on the role of CERD, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, and the Anti-Discrimination Unit of OHCHR in the monitoring of anti-Semitism. Following the conference, a process of consultations was started with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of OSCE to explore future cooperation and to discuss the rationalization of reporting requests addressed to States. OHCHR also participated in the OSCE meeting on the relationship between racism, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet and hate crimes, held in Paris in June 2004.

65. OHCHR has maintained close contact with regional organizations in Europe on the issue of respect for human rights in the context of counter-terrorism, in follow-up to the agreement reached at the Fifth High-Level Meeting between the United Nations and Regional Organizations in July 2003. The Office participated in a meeting in Vienna in March 2004, co-hosted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and OSCE, on improving cooperation between the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the Security Council and regional organizations. Also in March, OHCHR joined OSCE/ODIHR at a workshop on the protection of human rights while countering terrorism in Copenhagen. OHCHR and ODIHR are jointly preparing briefing materials on the relationship between human rights and terrorism for use in training programs.

66. At the request of the Ombudsman of Azerbaijan and UNDP, OHCHR participated in a round table of Central Asian Ombudsmen in Baku on 21 and 22 November 2003. The workshop looked at ways to reinforce cooperation among the ombudsmen and national institutions in Central Asia and to reinforce their commitment to compliance with the international standards concerning national institutions.

67. On 17 and 18 December 2003, OHCHR participated in a Council of Europe ad hoc brainstorming working group on irregular migrants, held in Strasbourg, France. The ad hoc working group on irregular migrants was set up by the secretariat of the Council of Europe to help prepare a report or study for the European Committee on

Migration, on the protection and promotion of the human rights of irregular migrants. The working group discussed concrete obstacles that irregular migrants seem to face with respect to, inter alia, health, employment, housing, education, residence and legal aid. The focus of the discussion was on the situation in different member States of the Council of Europe.

68. OHCHR supports the regional network of national human rights institutions of the European region, by providing information, regular updates and facilitating meetings during the sessions of the Commission on Human Rights.

E. Latin America and the Caribbean

69. Following consultations with Member States and national, subregional and regional institutions and experts in the field of human rights from Latin America and the Caribbean, OHCHR organized a regional workshop in Quito from 29 November to 1 December 1999. During this workshop the Quito Framework for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights was adopted. Participants in the workshop represented Governments, national human rights institutions, networks of non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and regional institutions. The Quito Framework has served as the basis for the regional strategy of OHCHR in Latin America and the Caribbean.

70. The long-term aim of the Quito Framework is to strengthen national capacities for the promotion of human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean through: (a) the development of national plans of action for the promotion and protection of human rights; (b) human rights education; (c) the establishment or strengthening of national human rights institutions; (d) the outcome of strategies for the development of economic, social and cultural rights; and (e) the promotion of the human rights of women, children and vulnerable groups.

71. Taking into account the main concerns affecting the Latin America and Caribbean region, OHCHR decided to mainstream human rights within the UNCTs and to prioritize activities at the national level through the joint implementation of activities with UNCTs. The second priority was to design regional and subregional strategies to deal with common concerns relating to the administration of justice, the realization of economic, social and cultural rights and the protection of vulnerable groups.

72. In 2003 the overriding strategy of OHCHR for its activities in the Latin American and Caribbean region, was the implementation of Action 2 of the Secretary-General's reform program. Action 2 calls for the OHCHR to work with UNCTs to strengthen national protection systems. The adoption of the Quito Framework in 1999 was the first concrete step in the elaboration of OHCHR's strategy for the Latin America and Caribbean region but, other two steps have been taken since then: an agreement with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in December 2000 for the establishment of the office of the Regional Representative of the OHCHR; and a series of consultations with United Nations partners, regional institutions and regional NGO networks, in order to address regional human rights concerns and identify joint priorities.

73. In April 2002, OHCHR approved a regional project for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Latin America and Caribbean region, which has

the Quito Framework as a reference. This project was extended until December 2004. In the framework of this regional project, the following activities were implemented during the reporting period:

(a) In March 2003 a consultation was held with United Nations and other international and regional partners in Barbados, as a step towards developing a specific approach for the English-speaking Caribbean. Some 30 representative of United Nations agencies, international cooperation agencies and of civil society organizations participated;

(b) In April 2003, the Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD), in cooperation with the OHCHR, completed a study on prison conditions for women in Central American countries;

(c) A regional workshop on the elaboration of strategies for the adoption and implementation of policies of affirmative action for Afro-descendants in the LAC region was held in May 2003 in Montevideo. Some 65 persons representing Governments, associations of national institutions and international financial agencies and non-governmental organizations participated;

(d) In May 2003 and April 2004, grants were provided to the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights (IIHR) to support the existence of an OHCHR human rights Chair in the annual training course of the IIHR. The objective of these grants is to facilitate the dissemination and the knowledge of international human rights instruments, the mechanisms of the Commission of Human Rights and the work of the Office of the High Commissioner;

(e) A workshop on reporting obligations for Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America and Equatorial Guinea was held in Tegucigalpa in May and June 2003. In addition to the 20 representatives of Governments, seven UNCTs, 14 national institutions and three NGOs participated at the workshop;

(f) In November 2003, a workshop on human rights for staff of ECLAC and members of the UNCT in Chile was held in Santiago de Chile. Some 35 persons participated;

(g) From 24 to 26 February 2004, OHCHR in coordination with the ILANUD organized a workshop on prison conditions for women in the Central American countries in Costa Rica. Representatives from Governments, national institutions and NGOs from seven countries of the subregion participated in this workshop. A declaration and a follow-up action plan were adopted by the participants.

74. In November 2001, the High Commissioner appointed a Regional Representative for the LAC region, based at ECLAC in Santiago. Since then, the Regional Representative has continued to facilitate the mainstreaming of human rights within ECLAC, and several UNCTs of the region. He also continued strengthening cooperation with regional institutions, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights, ILANUD and others. In May 2003 the office of the Regional Representative was strengthened with the temporary assignment of a substantive officer from OHCHR.

75. The Regional Representative has been providing permanent advisory services on human rights and related issues at the request of ECLAC. In this regard, the Office of the Regional Representative has established an electronic network of

information distributed to ECLAC staff and the UNCT concerning human rights related issues. The network is used, inter alia, to disseminate regularly recommendations adopted by the treaty bodies as well as extra-conventional mechanisms concerning countries of the region.

76. OHCHR has continued to strengthen its cooperation with the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) as its main counterpart in the Inter-American System, following the OHCHR Mission to the secretariat of the IACHR and to the OAS in July 2002. In addition to the participation of OHCHR's Regional Representative in major OAS meetings during 2003 and 2004, short-term exchanges of personnel between OHCHR and IACHR were encouraged, and a visit by IACHR representatives to OHCHR headquarters in Geneva was organized in January 2004, to improve the knowledge of OHCHR staff of the Inter-American Human Rights System.

77. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, OHCHR has supported the establishment and strengthening of the Network of National Human Rights Institutions of the Americas. The Office has supported annual meetings of the Network as well as seminars on specific issues, such as the rights of indigenous peoples, the rights of persons with disabilities and prevention of torture. Such meetings allow for an exchange of experiences and best practices among national human rights institutions of the region and contribute to strengthening cooperation between them. The Regional Representative participated in the General Assembly of the Network, held in Buenos Aires in June 2004. He also participated in the Annual Congress of the Ibero-American Federation of the Ombudsman, held in Quito in November 2004. The OHCHR also supported the participation of an expert on national human rights institutions in the annual meeting of the Caribbean Ombudsman Association in May 2004.

IV. Conclusion

78. **The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will continue to pay special attention to the development or strengthening of regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, and will ensure that, as indicated in this report, all its activities and strategies at regional and subregional levels are aimed at strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional arrangements in the field of human rights. The Office of the High Commissioner will continue to report on the results of the action taken in that respect, in response to the decisions by, and guidance received on this subject from, the General Assembly.**